



**Loudoun County Sheriff's Office**  
**False Alarm Reduction Unit**  
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## **False Alarm Prevention Tips**

Why is false alarm prevention important? There are two main reasons: deputy safety and making good use of dwindling resources. It is important that all alarm users become aware of the increasing burden false alarms place on police and sheriff's departments throughout the country. False alarms, for the most part are avoidable! If you are not part of the solution, then you are part of the problem.

Following are some tips to help you avoid common mistakes that cause false alarms.

- **Training!** Fully educate every person to whom you have given authority to enter your home or business on the precise operation of your alarm system. This may include domestic/cleaning crews, children, neighbors, caretakers, employees, temporary staff.
- Make sure that anyone who has keys to your home or business knows how to turn on and off the alarm system and knows the proper procedure to cancel a dispatch in the event of an accidental alarm activation.
- Before selecting an alarm system, consult several licensed alarm representatives about cost, the types of equipment with proven low false alarm rates, and exactly what type of equipment would be appropriate for your environment.
- Review with your alarm company the procedures you expect them to follow when an alarm activates. Do you want them to attempt to call more than one person on your contact list before requesting law enforcement dispatch? Do you only want the Sheriff's Office notified on exterior and interior alarm activations? Put your instructions in writing!
- Be sure that everyone with authority to operate your alarm system has been given the appropriate codes – one for turning the system on and off and the other to identify the person to the alarm company as someone with authority to be on the premises.
- Always keep doors and windows locked when the alarm is turned on to reduce the chance that friends, neighbors or customers enter and cause the alarm to activate.
- Use dead-bolt locks.
- Door and window frames must be kept in good condition, as loose joints could cause false alarms.
- Check for drafts that may move curtains, plants or hanging objects, such as Mylar balloons, which would activate motion sensors.
- If you have pets, take special care to purchase an alarm system that is tolerant of pets. Additionally, if you acquire new pets, be sure to advise your alarm company.
- Be aware that if cleaning and repair crews do cause false alarms for which you, as the alarm owner will be responsible.
- Regularly replace batteries in your system as per manufacturer specifications.
- Test your alarm system regularly. Be sure to notify your alarm company/monitoring company first so that no request for law enforcement dispatch is made.
- Have your alarm system checked once per year by a licensed and qualified alarm technician.

## **If You Accidentally Activate Your Alarm**

If you set off a burglary alarm by accident in a home or a business, try to contact the alarm company immediately if they do not call you. Do not call 911. If you cannot recite the property's password or code word over the phone to the alarm operator, the sheriff's office will be dispatched!

Responding to alarm calls is serious business for the sheriff's office. Every year, law enforcement officers are killed while responding to these types of calls. Until proven otherwise, we must assume that we are dealing with a crime in progress. Keep this in mind when you accidentally activate your alarm.